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City and County of San Francisco

RESULTS OF THE 1999 CITIZEN SURVEY

Edward Harrington, Controller

Prepared by Anne M. Jenkins, with assistance from the
Public Research Institute, San Francisco State University

April 1999

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Survey Conducted February – March 1999

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Citizen Survey

The San Francisco Citizen Survey is part of an ongoing effort to measure and improve the performance of City government. One of the most direct ways to measure the outcomes of the City's efforts—that is, the extent to which services are having their desired results—is to ask the users of those services. The 1999 Citizen Survey is the fourth annual survey conducted by the Controller's office for the City and County of San Francisco. In this fourth year, we continue to:

- measure changes over time in citizens' opinions of services such as libraries, parks and Muni;
- introduce new questions—on use of and preferences regarding computers and telecommunications; and
- seek the best ways to measure citizens' opinions.

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Major Findings in 1999

- Satisfaction with the **general performance of City government** is about the same in 1999 as in 1998, with **half** of the respondents choosing a **fair** rating. About 36% said City government is doing a **good** or **very good** job.
- San Franciscans' feelings of **safety** are similar in 1999 to previous years. Most residents feel safe to neutral in the daytime and in their own neighborhoods, but many feel unsafe or very unsafe at night in nearby parks or downtown.
- Survey respondents experienced a slight increase in **nonviolent crime** (burglary, car theft, etc.) in the 12 months preceding this survey over the previous 12 months.
- Ratings of facilities in **City parks** have **improved** slightly since last year. Opinions of park grounds are similar in 1999 and 1998, after a decline from 1997.
- **Dissatisfaction** with **Muni's timeliness** has increased. While opinions of the **convenience** of Muni's **routes** are generally favorable, they have worsened since 1998.
- Residents of the **Southeast** region of the City feel **less safe** in their neighborhoods than those who live in other parts of the City. Southeast residents are also **less satisfied** with parks and Muni service, and less likely to have computers and Internet access, than other San Franciscans.
- **Long-term residents** of San Francisco (more than 19 years) are **less satisfied** with City government in general, parks and safety than more recent arrivals.
- A large and increasing number of survey respondents have **home computers** and access to the **Internet**. There is considerable variation among different demographic groups.

Who Participates in the Survey?

In February and March of 1999, we surveyed a total of 1,946 San Franciscans. Of the total sample,

- 79% (1,545) completed a written questionnaire, and
- 21% (401) were interviewed by telephone.

Response rates were:

- 32% for the written survey (1,545 questionnaires returned out of 4,823 mailed and deliverable) and
- 44% for the telephone (401 completed interviews out of 906 answered calls).

Each year we try to draw a sample of survey respondents that resembles the City's population in demographic characteristics. The telephone interviews enable us to reach more young residents and recent arrivals to the City, who are underrepresented in the mail survey. We also oversample in neighborhoods with traditionally low response rates. We still find that survey respondents on average:

- are more educated;
- live in larger households;
- include fewer African-American and Latino residents; and
- have been in San Francisco longer

than the population as a whole. The demographic section of this report provides a more detailed description of the survey sample. For some population characteristics, we rely on data from the 1990 U.S. Census. Differences between the survey and Census data may reflect actual changes in the City's population since 1990.

Interpreting Trends in Survey Results

Our survey method is substantially the same in 1999 as in 1998, as are the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents. Changes that may affect comparisons of survey findings over several years include:

- the addition of a telephone survey in 1998 and 1999, whereas only a mail survey was used in 1996 an 1997; and
- the use of a different source for the mail survey sample list in 1996 than in subsequent years.

We have found that telephone interviewees rate the quality of most City services as slightly better than mail respondents. Among frequent users of a service, however, there are fewer differences based on the survey method.

Results of the 1999 Citizen Survey

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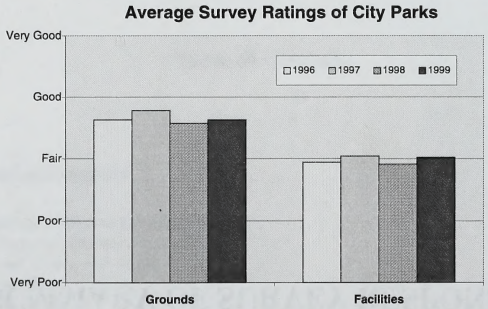
SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESPONSES

PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS



Summary Findings

- Ratings of park **grounds** are similar in 1998 and 1999, averaging between **good** and **fair**. Ratings are less favorable than in 1996 and 1997.
- Ratings of park **facilities** have improved slightly from 1998 to 1999, but have averaged around a rating of **fair** for the last four years.
- **Frequent visitors** (once a month or more) to Golden Gate Park rate park grounds more favorably; 66% of frequent users rate grounds **good** or **very good**, as opposed to 56% of infrequent visitors.
- Respondents living in the **Southeast** part of the City rate quality of park grounds worse than do residents of other areas. Southeast residents are also less frequent visitors to Golden Gate Park.
- **Long-term residents** of San Francisco (over 19 years) are less favorable in their ratings of parks than are more recent arrivals.
- As we would expect, residents of the West side of the City were found to visit Golden Gate Park most often.
- Half of the respondents to this survey did not rate the City's **recreation programs**, indicating that they had not used them.
- Of those respondents who give an opinion of the convenience, cost and quality of City recreation programs, about **half** choose **good** or **very good**. Another **40%** rate the programs **fair**. These ratings are similar to previous years.
- About 20% of survey respondents indicate that a member of their household has participated in a City recreational activity in the past year. This is similar to reported participation in 1998, and down slightly from 26% in 1997.

PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS

Survey Questions and Responses

In general, how do you rate the quality of the City's parks in the following categories?

	VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES*	MEAN SCORE**
♦ grounds (landscaping, plantings)	13%	46%	33%	6%	2%	1808	2.37
♦ facilities (cleanliness, maintenance)	4%	26%	44%	19%	7%	1714	2.98

In the past **year**, how often did you:

	AT LEAST ONCE/WEEK	AT LEAST ONCE/MONTH	SEVERAL TIMES/YEAR	ONCE OR TWICE/YEAR	NEVER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
♦ visit Golden Gate Park?	13%	20%	35%	23%	9%	1903
♦ visit other City parks?	16%	18%	29%	21%	16%	1852

In general, how do you rate the City's recreation programs and facilities (such as recreation/ community centers, playgrounds, drama and dance classes, art centers, summer day camps, etc.)?

	VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES*	MEAN SCORE**
♦ convenience (location, hours)	10%	44%	37%	7%	2%	906	2.47
♦ cost	14%	36%	41%	7%	2%	835	2.49
♦ quality of programs	9%	42%	38%	8%	3%	835	2.52

Did anyone in your household take part in a City recreation activity in the past year?

Percentage of respondents reporting someone had participated in a recreational activity

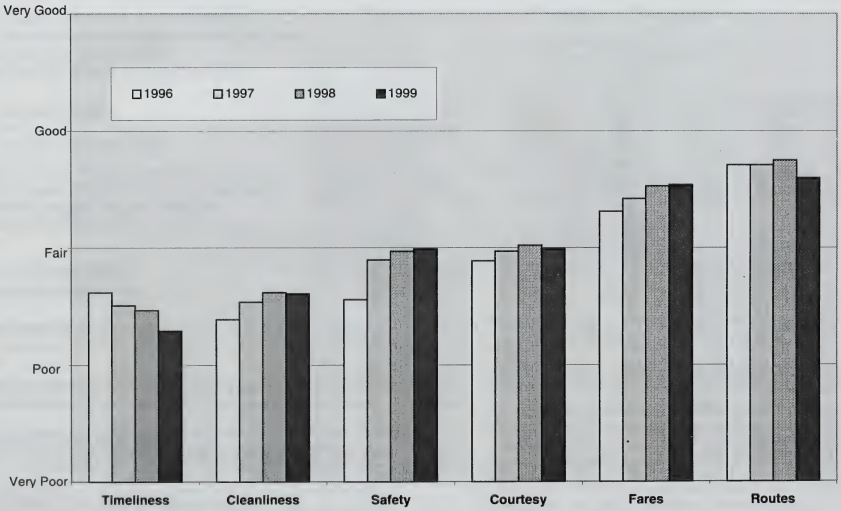
AGE 12 & UNDER	AGE 13 TO 18	AGE 19 TO 54	AGE 55 & OVER
7%	4%	7%	5%

* Number of responses to each question, excluding "Have not used" responses to quality questions.

** A lower mean score is more favorable.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION (MUNI)

Average Survey Ratings of Muni Service



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION (MUNI)

Summary Findings

- Ratings of Muni's **timeliness and reliability** have worsened, to an average score of **poor** (3.70).
- While ratings of Muni's **route structure** are generally favorable, satisfaction has declined from previous years. The percentage of respondents finding the convenience of Muni's routes **good** or **very good** has dropped from 68% in 1998 to 61% in 1999. Muni has not reduced its route coverage in the past year.
- As in previous years, survey respondents' opinions of Muni's **fares** are largely positive to neutral (89% **fair** or better).
- **Frequent users** (several times a week or more) rate Muni significantly worse in the areas of cleanliness and timeliness/reliability than infrequent users.
- **Full-time workers** rate timeliness and reliability of Muni worse than non-working respondents do. Those with four years or more of college rate timeliness and reliability worse than do respondents with less education.
- **Southeast** residents are generally less satisfied with the convenience of routes, and with safety on Muni, than are residents of the rest of the City.

Survey Questions and Responses

In general, how do you rate the quality of the Muni transit system in the following categories?

	VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	MEAN SCORE**
♦ convenience of routes	17%	44%	26%	8%	5%	1694	2.40
♦ timeliness/reliability	2%	13%	28%	28%	29%	1686	3.70
♦ cleanliness	2%	16%	39%	28%	15%	1696	3.38
♦ fares	15%	39%	35%	7%	4%	1675	2.46
♦ safety	3%	30%	40%	17%	10%	1669	3.01
♦ courtesy of drivers	5%	27%	40%	17%	11%	1697	3.01

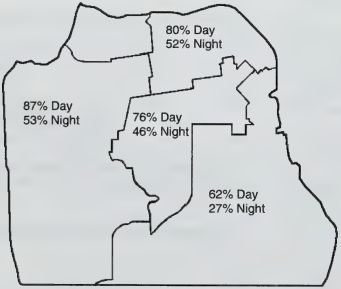
In a typical month, how often do you ride Muni?

DAILY	SEVERAL TIMES/WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE/WEEK	SEVERAL TIMES/ MONTH	ONCE OR TWICE/ MONTH	NEVER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
28%	17%	11%	12%	17%	15%	1811

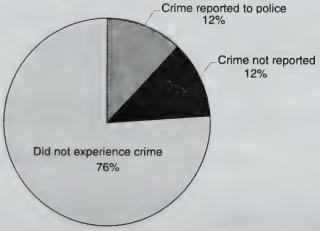
** A lower mean score is more favorable.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Percentage of Survey Respondents who Feel Safe or Very Safe Walking Alone in their Neighborhoods



Incidence of Nonviolent Crime (Burglary, etc.)



Summary Findings

- Survey respondents feel **about as safe** in 1999 as in 1998 and 1997. On average, San Franciscans feel safe to neutral in the daytime and in their own neighborhoods, but many feel unsafe or very unsafe at night in nearby parks or downtown. There are significant differences by area of the City, time lived here, age, sex, ethnicity and education level.
- **Southeast** residents feel **less safe** walking alone in their neighborhoods, day or night, or in the park during the day, than those in other areas of the City.
- Respondents aged **60 and older** feel less safe in all of the situations listed than do younger residents. Residents of San Francisco for more than 19 years also report feeling less safe than more recent arrivals.
- **White** respondents report feeling safer than African-American, Asian and Latino respondents about walking in their neighborhoods, day or night, or walking downtown or in the park in the day.
- **Men** report feeling safer walking downtown at any time, and walking in the park at night, than do women.
- More respondents experienced **nonviolent crime** (burglary, car theft, etc.) in the 12 months preceding the 1999 survey (24%) than a year ago (20%). Incidence of violent crime as reported in the survey has not changed significantly over the years; 7% were victims of a violent crime.
- Similarly to in previous years, crime victims reported 55% of violent crimes and 50% of nonviolent crimes to the police.
- Nonviolent crime was more frequent among Central and Southeast residents than those in the Western part of the City. The survey did not detect any differences in violent crime by region.
- Residents between 20 and 44 years old experienced more nonviolent crime than younger or older residents. No age differences in violent crime rates were detected.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Survey Questions and Responses

How safe would you feel walking alone:	VERY SAFE 1	SAFE 2	NEITHER SAFE NOR UNSAFE 3	UNSAFE 4	VERY UNSAFE 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	MEAN SCORE
during the day							
♦ in your neighborhood?	35%	41%	16%	5%	3%	1922	2.01
♦ in the park closest to you?	20%	40%	23%	13%	4%	1863	2.42
♦ downtown?	17%	42%	28%	10%	3%	1886	2.41
at night							
♦ in your neighborhood?	11%	32%	25%	21%	11%	1908	2.88
♦ in the park closest to you?	2%	12%	23%	37%	26%	1849	3.72
♦ downtown?	2%	16%	33%	33%	16%	1855	3.44
How safe do you feel crossing the street?	9%	35%	30%	19%	7%	1906	2.82

Have you been a victim of a crime during the last twelve months, and if so, was it reported to police? (If more than once, please answer for *the last time.*)	WAS VICTIM OF CRIME, REPORTED TO POLICE	WAS VICTIM OF CRIME, DID NOT REPORT	WAS VICTIM OF CRIME, TOTAL	WAS NOT VICTIM OF CRIME	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
♦ Violent crime (mugging, rape, assault, battering, etc.)	4%	3%	7%	93%	1777
♦ Nonviolent crime (burglary, car theft, etc.)	12%	12%	24%	76%	1788

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Summary Findings

- Ratings of library services are generally the same as last year. **Staff assistance** continues to receive favorable ratings in 1999 (74% good or very good); other library ratings range from 59% to 66% favorable.
- **The Main library:** Frequent users (once a month or more) rate the quality of library materials and programs for children more favorably than do infrequent users. Frequent users of the Main library are more likely than infrequent users to live in the Central part of the City, and to be renters, under 30 years old, and residents of San Francisco for less than 20 years.
- **Branch libraries:** Frequent users rate staff assistance and the convenience of hours more favorably than do infrequent users. Frequent users of the City's branch libraries are more likely than infrequent users to be long-term San Francisco residents, own their home, live outside the Central area and in households of four or more people.

Survey Questions and Responses

In general, how do you rate the quality of the City's libraries in the following categories?

	VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	MEAN SCORE**
♦ collections of books, tapes, etc.	18%	48%	27%	6%	1%	1274	2.25
♦ convenience of hours	12%	48%	30%	8%	2%	1288	2.39
♦ assistance from library staff	25%	49%	21%	4%	1%	1251	2.08
♦ computer resources	15%	44%	32%	7%	2%	981	2.39
♦ programs and activities for children	19%	47%	28%	5%	1%	659	2.24

In the past year, how often did you:

	AT LEAST ONCE/WEEK	AT LEAST ONCE/MONTH	SEVERAL TIMES/YEAR	ONCE OR TWICE/YEAR	NEVER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
♦ visit the City's Main library?	4%	12%	22%	23%	39%	1909
♦ visit branch libraries?	7%	16%	20%	16%	41%	1882
♦ contact a City library by telephone?	1%	3%	9%	17%	70%	1878
♦ contact a City library by computer?	1%	3%	4%	5%	87%	1878

** A lower mean score is more favorable.

GENERAL CITY PERFORMANCE

Summary Findings

- The most common assessment of local government in general is "fair," as it has been each year. Answers to this question improved somewhat from 1996 to 1997, and have remained essentially the same since 1997.
- As in previous years, there is no significant difference in ratings of local government performance by region of the City.
- Survey respondents who have lived in San Francisco for **over 19 years** rate the services provided by local government **less favorably** than do more recent City residents.

Survey Questions and Responses

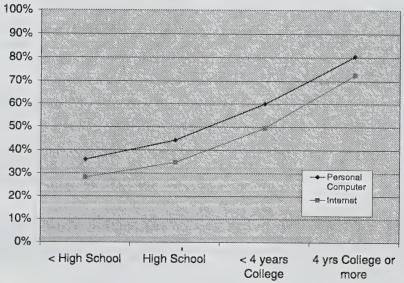
Overall, how good a job do you think local government is doing at providing services?

	VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	MEAN SCORE**
1999 Survey	3%	33%	50%	11%	3%	1853	2.77
1998 Survey	4%	32%	50%	11%	3%	1849	2.76
1997 Survey	5%	31%	52%	9%	3%	1197	2.75
1996 Survey	2%	23%	56%	14%	5%	1738	2.97

** A lower mean score is more favorable.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND COMPUTER USE

Computers and Internet Access in the Home by Level of Education Completed



Summary Findings

- **Computer ownership and Internet use have increased** since the 1998 survey. This pattern is consistent with trends reported elsewhere.
- Our survey sample has a large number of college-educated respondents, and thus may overstate computer and Internet use somewhat.
- **Computer ownership and Internet use vary considerably among different demographic groups**:
  - **Education:** Computer ownership, Internet, telephone and fax lines all increase with respondents' level of education.
  - **Employment:** Those working at least part time had more computer and Internet use.
  - **Ethnicity:** White respondents had higher rates of computer use, Internet connection and Internet commerce than African-American and Latino respondents. Among college-educated respondents, however, there are fewer differences by ethnicity.
  - **Region:** Residents of the Central and West regions of the City have higher levels of computer ownership than those in the North and Southeast regions. These differences disappear when controlling for college education.
  - **Age:** Respondents under 60 years old have more phone lines, computers and Internet connections than those 60 or older.
  - **Time in San Francisco:** Residents of 19 years or less in San Francisco have higher rates of computer and Internet use.
  - **Housing:** Homeowners have higher rates of computer ownership, Internet use, number of telephone lines, and dedicated lines for fax or computer.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND COMPUTER USE

Survey Questions and Responses

Does anyone in your household:

	Yes	No	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
♦ have a personal computer at home?	68%	32%	1913
♦ use a personal computer to reach the Internet from home?	60%	40%	1773
♦ buy or sell goods and services on the Internet?	34%	66%	1768

Would you like to do any of the following business with the City over the Internet?

	Yes
♦ Pay parking tickets	39%
♦ Buy a Muni pass	35%
♦ Apply for a City job	34%
♦ Pay water bill	29%
♦ Apply for a business license	23%
♦ Pay property taxes	23%
♦ Apply for a building permit	21%
♦ Buy a dog license	18%
♦ Other	8%

How many telephone lines currently provide service to your home?

1	2	3 or more	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
60%	29%	11%	1863

Do you use any of these lines primarily for fax machine or computer modem?

Yes	No	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
37%	63%	1856

If YES, how many of them?

1	2 or more	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
85%	15%	618

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Demographic information for the San Francisco population is included for comparison with the survey sample. Where available, recent population estimates are included, but in some cases, the best information available comes from the 1990 Census. Comparisons with the Census are not conclusive, in that: (1) the Census undercounted certain groups within the City, and (2) population characteristics have changed since 1990. For example, we know from State population data that the age distribution of San Francisco's population has shifted toward older residents during the 1990s. We expect that it has shifted toward more educated residents as well.

How many people live in your household?

	1	2	3	4	5	6 OR MORE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1999 Survey	21%	37%	17%	13%	7%	5%	1871
1998 Survey	22%	36%	16%	14%	6%	6%	1866
1997 Survey	22%	36%	16%	14%	6%	6%	1164
1990 Census	39%	30%	13%	9%	4%	5%	

- As in previous years, people who live alone are underrepresented in the sample of 1999.
- More survey respondents in the North and Central sections of the City live in small households than in the West and Southeast.

How long have you lived in San Francisco?

	LESS THAN 1 YEAR	1 TO 4 YEARS	5 TO 9 YEARS	10 TO 19 YEARS	OVER 19 YEARS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1999 Survey	2%	16%	15%	21%	46%	1906
1998 Survey	2%	15%	16%	22%	45%	1912
1997 Survey	3%	15%	19%	29%	44%	1183
1999 Combined	18%			82%		
1990 Census	27%			73%		

- The survey sample includes a higher than expected proportion of people who have been in San Francisco five years or longer. The gap between the survey sample and the Census is about the same in 1999 as in 1998 and 1997.
- Respondents in the West and Southeast regions of the City have been in San Francisco more time on average than those in the North and Central regions.
- Mailing lists for individuals inevitably omit a lot of people who have been in the City less than one year.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Do you own or rent your home?

	OWN	RENT	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1999 Survey *(adult individuals)*	43%	57%	1888
1998 Survey *(adult individuals)*	44%	56%	1893
1997 Survey *(adult individuals)*	42%	58%	1179
1998 data from SF Rent Board *(households)**	35%	65%	

* These figures are consistent with 1990 Census data.

- As in previous years, survey respondents in the North and Central sections of the City include more renters than in the West and Southeast.
- Comparison data were not available for individuals, as opposed to households. Some of the difference between the percentage of renters in the survey sample and the household data reported here is the result of the renters having on average fewer individuals per household than homeowners do.

What is your sex?

	FEMALE	MALE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1999 Survey	51%	49%	1905
1998 Survey	51%	49%	1905
1997 Survey	54%	46%	1179
1996 SF Population (Cal. Department of Finance)	51%	49%	

What is your age?

	Under 20	20 TO 29	30 TO 44	45 TO 59	60 TO 74	OVER 74	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1999 Survey	2%	18%	32%	24%	16%	8%	1897
1998 Survey	1%	16%	34%	25%	16%	8%	1897
1997 Survey	1%	16%	32%	25%	17%	9%	1182
1996 SF Population (Cal. Department of Finance)	2%	16%	37%	22%	14%	9%	

- The ages of survey respondents generally resemble the San Francisco population as estimated by the State Department of Finance, except that the survey has captured fewer people in the 30 to 44 year old range than would be expected.
- The mail survey reaches a disproportionate number of people aged 60 and older, while the telephone method is more likely to reach those under 30 years of age.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Which of these comes closest to describing your sexual orientation?

	BISEXUAL	GAY/LESBIAN	HETEROSEXUAL	OTHER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1999 Survey	3%	11%	84%	2%	1750
1998 Survey	4%	10%	83%	3%	1749
1997 Survey	5%	9%	82%	4%	1094
1996 Survey	5%	13%	77%	5%	1660

- The Central section of the City has the highest reported proportion of gay and lesbian residents, at 23%.
- We do not have a benchmark against which to measure how well our sample represents the City. However, the proportions have not changed significantly in the three years of the survey.

Which of these comes closest to describing your ethnic background?

	AFRICAN-AMER./BLACK	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISL.	LATINO/ HISPANIC	NATIVE AMER./INDIAN	WHITE/ CAUCASIAN	MIXED OR OTHER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1999 Survey	5%	28%	9%	1%	52%	5%	1853
1998 Survey	5%	30%	7%	<1%	51%	7%	1864
1997 Survey	5%	30%	7%	<1%	50%	7%	1160
1996 SF Adult Pop. (Cal. Dept. of Finance)	9%	31%	14%	<1%	45%	0%	

- African-American and Latino San Franciscans are under-represented in the survey sample. **Some portion of the difference may reflect the inclusion of a mixed ethnicity option on the survey**, which is not included in the U.S. Census, on which the State Department of Finance estimates above are based.
- Relative to other areas of the City,
  - the Southeast has a higher proportion of African-American and Latino/Hispanic respondents;
  - the West has a higher proportion of Asian respondents; and
  - the Central and Northern sections have a higher proportion of white respondents.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	LESS THAN 4 YRS COLLEGE	COLLEGE OR POSTGRADUATE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1999 Survey	6%	13%	25%	56%	1878
1998 Survey	6%	16%	24%	55%	1888
1997 Survey	6%	18%	28%	48%	1165
1990 Census	22%	18%	27%	33%	

- The survey sample includes a higher proportion of college graduates than the population as reflected in the 1990 Census. We expect that the Census data are outdated, given changes in the City's population during the last eight years.
- Higher education levels generally correspond with higher incomes. In general, we find more educated survey respondents being more satisfied with costs of recreation programs and Muni fares.
- Respondents from the North and Central regions of the City are more likely to have four years or more of college than the respondents from the other parts of the City.

How many hours a week do you work in paid employment?

	NONE	1 TO 14	15 TO 35	35 OR MORE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1999 Survey	26%	3%	11%	60%	1744
1998 Survey	27%	2%	12%	59%	1779
1997 Survey	29%	3%	12%	56%	1061
1990 Census	30%	3%	12%	55%	

- Employment status varies by age: most people over 60 and under 20 are not employed, while most of those between ages of 20 and 59 work 35 or more hours a week. Respondents under 20 are more likely to work part time or not work at all compared to other age groups.
- In 1998, some records were coded incorrectly, leading to an apparent drop in the number of respondents with no paid employment. That error has been corrected, and the table above reflects the accurate proportions.

SURVEY PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

A. Purpose of the Survey

The 1999 Citizen Survey is part of an ongoing effort to measure and improve the performance of City government in San Francisco. Increasingly, government auditor-controllers are reporting on service efforts and accomplishments as well as financial performance. Everyone needs information on the extent to which services are having their desired results; that is, the *outcomes* of the City's efforts. One of the most direct ways to measure outcomes is to ask the users of City services.

This is San Francisco's fourth annual Citizen Survey. This year, we ask many of the same questions as in the two prior years, in order to measure changes in people's experience and perceptions of City government services. In 1999 we introduced some new questions on computer and internet use. Comparisons to the prior survey outcomes become more useful as we compile several years of data, and changes in citizen satisfaction over time will help us measure the success of policy and budget initiatives.

In interpreting the results of the survey, it is worth noting that many factors influence the ratings of a particular service, including different expectations for different types of services. Similar surveys in other areas have found that certain services are consistently rated more highly than others. For example, fire departments and libraries get higher ratings than transit in other cities, as well as in San Francisco.

B. Which Services? What kinds of Questions?

The 1998 survey covers parks, recreation programs, Muni, libraries, public safety, and telecommunications, as well as a question about City services overall. Survey questions were developed to meet several requirements, including:

(1) the services or issues in question are of concern to a large number of San Franciscans;

(2) services are visible to or used by enough people that a large number of survey respondents can rate them;

(3) survey questions provide information that is not more easily obtained from another source; and

(4) all questions fit on a one-piece mailer and do not take so long to complete as to discourage responses.

The omission of a service area does not reflect a lack of importance to the City, but rather a lack of space or an assessment that a citywide survey is not the best way to measure performance in that area. For example, we omitted questions about public schools and the fire department from the survey, after learning in 1996 that only a small proportion of our sample had sufficient experience to give an opinion of these services.

C. Survey Methods and Response Rates

We surveyed a total of 1,946 San Franciscans, using two methods – a mailed questionnaire and telephone interviews. Of the total sample, 79% were surveyed by mail and 21% by telephone.

1. Written Questionnaire

In February 1999, the Controller's office sent questionnaires to 5,485 randomly selected San Franciscans, with a letter explaining the purpose of the survey and how to complete it. Reminder postcards and a second copy of the survey followed after a few weeks. The pool of potential respondents was reduced to 4,823 by surveys that were undeliverable because of incorrect or out-of-date addresses. By mid-March (our cutoff point to start analyzing results), we had received 1,545 responses, for a response rate of 32%.

We numbered each questionnaire in order to track responses, but asked respondents to remove the page with their name and address. Individual responses have been kept confidential. The numbering system allowed us to tailor our follow-up mailings to nonrespondents only, and to group responses by zip code.

Before mailing the survey, we sent out a postcard in English, Spanish and Chinese with telephone numbers to call for a survey in Chinese or Spanish. Demand for the Chinese and Spanish language surveys was small.

2. Telephone Interviews

For the second year, we also surveyed San Franciscans by telephone. The 401 interviews included the same questions as the written questionnaire. The response rate was 44%, out of 906 completed phone calls.

Telephone interviews were conducted in Spanish, Cantonese and Mandarin as needed.

D. Analysis by Neighborhood

We grouped City zip codes into four large areas. [1] They encompass the following neighborhoods:

Central: 94102, 94103, 94114, 94117, 94131 (Haight, Castro, Noe Valley, Civic Center, South of Market, Diamond Heights, Glen Park, Twin Peaks, Buena Vista, Fillmore, Glen Canyon Park).

North: 94104, 94105, 94108, 94109, 94111, 94115, 94123, 94133 (North Beach, Chinatown, Marina, Pacific Heights, Western Addition, Russian Hill, Nob Hill, Telegraph Hill, Financial District, Cow Hollow).

Southeast: 94107, 94110, 94112, 94124, 94134 (Mission, Potrero Hill, Bayview, Hunters Point, Excelsior, Ingleside, Visitacion Valley, Bernal Heights, Portola, Ocean View).

West: 94116, 94118, 94121, 94122, 94127, 94132 (Richmond, Sunset, Stonestown, Parkside, Forest Hill, Seacliff, Park Merced, Presidio Heights, Laurel Heights, West Portal, St. Francis Wood, Miraloma Park).

A small number of responses are excluded from the neighborhood analysis, from respondents who deleted tracking numbers from their surveys, and thus could not be associated with a zip code. Appendix A includes a map of geographic areas and breakdown of the sample by large area and zip code.

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[1] Using large areas allowed for sample sizes large enough to determine some differences among groups. Boundaries were chosen to provide demographic as well as geographic similarity. There was no grouping scheme that made sense for all questions; for example, the Mission zip code of 94110 is included in the Southeast group, but it is more like the Central group for the purposes of Muni routes. Similarly, while the Haight area zip code 94117 is included in the Central group, it is more like the West group in terms of visits to Golden Gate Park.

E. How Well do the Survey Respondents Represent San Franciscans?

Respondents to the 1999 Citizen Survey differ in some respects from the San Francisco population. In comparing demographic characteristics with data on San Franciscans as a whole, survey respondents:

- are more educated;
- live in larger households;
- include fewer African-American and Latino residents; and
- have been in San Francisco longer

than the population as a whole.

Within the survey group, those reached by mail and telephone also differ from each other in some characteristics. In some areas, the addition of the telephone survey improves the representativeness of the sample, while in others, it contributes to the distortion.

- **Age –** the telephone was more likely to reach those under 30 years of age. The addition of the telephone survey seems to have evened out a bias in the mail survey toward older residents (over 60); however, our combined methods underrepresent somewhat those between 30 and 44 years of age.

- **Ethnicity** – both survey methods underrepresent African-Americans and oversample white residents. The telephone survey obtained higher proportions of Latino respondents, but fewer Asian respondents, than the mail survey.

- **Time in San Francisco** – the telephone survey included a higher percentage of recent residents.

Some of the distortion in our sample is a result of who we are able to reach – the composition of our mailing list and the distribution of telephone numbers. Another source is **nonresponse bias**, which occurs when those who choose to respond differ in demographic characteristics, and opinions, from those who do not respond. The difference in responses between the first and second mailings of the survey suggests that additional efforts bring in more of the people who are underrepresented in the sample. We continue to pursue new ways of generating a more representative group of survey respondents.

F. Sample Source

The mail survey respondents' names and addresses came from two sources: State Department of Motor Vehicles records and voter registrations. These files were merged, and duplicate records were eliminated where possible.

We used a stratified sampling method, selecting a specified number of names from each zip code, in order to reflect that zip code's proportion of the adult population of the City, and to compensate for low response rates in some zip codes in previous surveys.

Telephone numbers for interviews were generated randomly, and respondents were not asked their identities, but only their zip codes. Exchanges were selected in order to get respondents from the four large geographic areas identified for survey analysis.

G. Sampling Error

With a total sample size of 1,946, the estimated sampling error is about ±2.2% at the 95% confidence level. This means that we are 95% confident that all adult San Francisco residents would produce responses to each survey question within a little more than two percentage points of the results obtained from this sample. For example, 46% of survey respondents rated park grounds as "good"; we are 95% sure that if we asked all San Francisco residents, we would get a response between about 44% and 48% for this same item.

Sampling errors are larger for sample subgroups, such as residents of the Central part of the City, and for questions that received fewer responses, such as ratings of recreation programs.

This measurable error, which results from using a sample to represent a whole population, does not account for other sources of error which are more difficult to measure, such as nonresponse bias.

H. Acknowledgments

Statistical analysis for this report was provided by Geneviève Ste-Marie and Karen Smith of the Public Research Institute (PRI) at San Francisco State University. PRI also conducted the telephone interviews.

In the Controller's office, Cecile Soliai, Levella Johnson, Paquita Johnson, Carolyn Lew, Rowena Rand, Linda Torres, Linda Parks and Daniel Van Harley provided valuable assistance with mailing, coding and translation.

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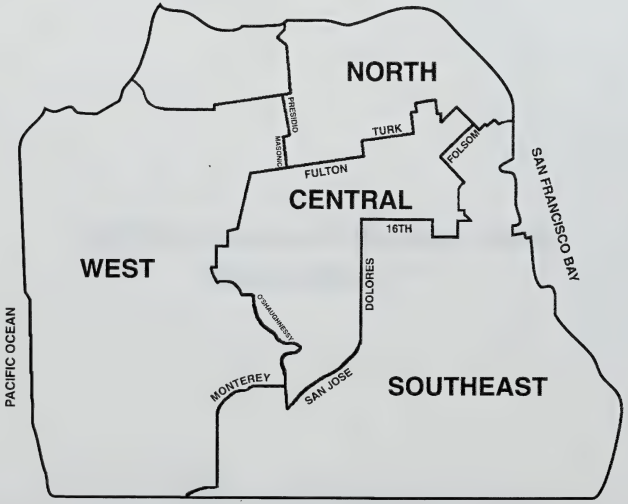
We are indebted to the City of Portland, particularly Richard Tracy and Ellen Jean, who shared information and samples of Portland's Citizen Survey and performance measures report, from which we have borrowed heavily.

All of the report's conclusions are the responsibility of the Controller's office.

APPENDIX A:
Map and List of Geographic Areas

Map of Geographic Areas for Survey Analysis



Geographic Areas for Survey Analysis

Area	Zip Code	Neighborhoods	SF Adult Population (1)		Mail Sample 1999		Phone Sample 1999		Total Sample 1999	
Central	94102	Civic Center	26,003	4.3%	76	4.9%	15	3.7%	91	4.7%
	94103	South of Market	17,137	2.8%	34	2.2%	7	1.7%	41	2.1%
	94114	Castro, Noe Valley	30,145	5.0%	63	4.1%	18	4.5%	81	4.2%
	94117	Haight-Ashbury, Buena Vista	35,091	5.8%	92	6.0%	20	5.0%	112	5.8%
	94131	Diamond Hts, Glen Park, Twin Peaks	24,766	4.1%	66	4.3%	30	7.5%	96	4.9%
			133,142	22.0%	331	21.4%	90	22.4%	421	21.6%
North	94104	Financial District	54	0.0%	1	0.1%	-	0.0%	1	0.1%
	94105	Financial District South of Market	573	0.1%	1	0.1%	2	0.5%	3	0.2%
	94108	Chinatown, Union Square	13,003	2.2%	33	2.1%	5	1.2%	38	2.0%
	94109	Russian Hill, Nob Hill	44,009	7.3%	102	6.6%	32	8.0%	134	6.9%
	94111	Embarcadero	3,436	0.6%	4	0.3%	2	0.0%	3	0.2%
	94115	Pacific Heights, Western Addition	26,535	4.4%	54	3.5%	17	4.2%	71	3.6%
	94123	Marina, Cow Hollow	20,548	3.4%	46	3.0%	12	3.0%	58	3.0%
	94133	Telegraph Hill, North Beach	24,251	4.0%	58	3.8%	9	2.2%	67	3.4%
			132,409	21.9%	299	19.4%	79	19.7%	378	19.4%
Southeast	94107	Potrero Hill, South of Market	11,262	1.9%	40	2.6%	6	1.5%	46	2.4%
	94110	Mission, Bernal Heights	60,748	10.1%	165	10.7%	54	13.5%	219	11.3%
	94112	Excelsior, Ingleside, Ocean View	53,522	8.9%	141	9.1%	37	9.2%	178	9.1%
	94124	Bayview, Hunters Point	19,005	3.1%	53	3.4%	12	3.0%	65	3.3%
	94134	Portola, Visitacion Valley	24,833	4.1%	61	3.9%	8	2.0%	69	3.5%
			169,370	28.0%	460	29.8%	117	29.2%	577	29.7%
West	94116	Parkside, Forest Hill	31,007	5.1%	71	4.6%	19	4.7%	90	4.6%
	94118	Laurel Heights, Richmond	30,945	5.1%	85	5.5%	24	6.0%	109	5.6%
	94121	Richmond, Seacliff	32,041	5.3%	74	4.8%	12	3.0%	86	4.4%
	94122	Sunset	41,153	6.8%	90	5.8%	24	6.0%	114	5.9%
	94127	W. Portal, Miraloma Pk., St. Francis Wd	14,087	2.3%	38	2.5%	15	3.7%	53	2.7%
	94132	Stonestown, Park Merced	19,966	3.3%	56	3.6%	21	5.2%	77	4.0%
			169,199	28.0%	414	26.8%	115	28.7%	529	27.2%
	94100	Other/Unknown	-	0.0%	41	2.7%	-	0.0%	41	2.1%
Total City			604,120	100.0%	1,545	100.0%	401	100.0%	1,946	100.0%

(1) Sourcebook of Zip Code Demographics, 1998 ed.